

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF SOUTH CAROLINA

James Brown,)	C/A No. 0:17-1470-CMC-PJG
)	
Petitioner,)	
)	REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION
v.)	
)	
Warden Scott Lewis,)	
)	
Respondent.)	
_____)	

The petitioner, James Brown, a self-represented state prisoner, filed a petition for a writ of habeas corpus pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2254. Petitioner files this action *in forma pauperis* under 28 U.S.C. § 1915. This Petition is before the court pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 636(b) and Local Civil Rule 73.02(B)(2)(c) (D.S.C.). Having reviewed the Petition in accordance with applicable law, the court concludes that it should be summarily dismissed without prejudice and without requiring the respondent to file a return.

I. Factual and Procedural Background

Petitioner indicates he was convicted of murder in 2002 in Spartanburg County and sentenced to life imprisonment. In 2010, following a direct appeal and multiple post-conviction relief cases in state court, Petitioner filed a petition for a writ of habeas corpus pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2254 in this court challenging his 2002 state murder conviction. Brown v. McCall, C/A No. 0:10-cv-03025-CMC. In the 2010 habeas petition, Petitioner raised claims of trial error and a claim of prosecutorial misconduct. However, that petition was ultimately dismissed with prejudice for failure to prosecute the matter pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 41(b). Petitioner now files this § 2254 habeas

petition, raising claims of ineffective assistance of post-conviction relief counsel, ineffective assistance of trial counsel, and newly discovered evidence.

II. Discussion

A. Standard of Review

Under established local procedure in this judicial district, a careful review has been made of the *pro se* petition filed in this case pursuant to the Rules Governing § 2254 Cases, 28 U.S.C. § 2254; the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 (“AEDPA”), Pub. L. No. 104-132, 110 Stat. 1214; and in light of the following precedents: Denton v. Hernandez, 504 U.S. 25 (1992); Neitzke v. Williams, 490 U.S. 319, 324-25 (1989); Haines v. Kerner, 404 U.S. 519 (1972); Nasim v. Warden, Md. House of Corr., 64 F.3d 951 (4th Cir. 1995) (en banc); Todd v. Baskerville, 712 F.2d 70 (4th Cir. 1983).

This court is required to liberally construe *pro se* petitions, which are held to a less stringent standard than those drafted by attorneys. Erickson v. Pardus, 551 U.S. 89, 94 (2007); King v. Rubenstein, 825 F.3d 206, 214 (4th Cir. 2016). Nonetheless, the requirement of liberal construction does not mean that the court can ignore a clear failure in the pleading to allege facts which set forth a claim cognizable in a federal district court. See Weller v. Dep’t of Soc. Servs., 901 F.2d 387 (4th Cir. 1990); see also Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 684 (2009) (outlining pleading requirements under Rule 8 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure for “all civil actions”).

B. Analysis

The instant case should be summarily dismissed as a successive § 2254 petition. “[A]n individual may not file a second or successive § 2254 petition for a writ of habeas corpus or § 2255 motion to vacate sentence without first receiving permission to do so from the appropriate circuit

court of appeals.” In re Vial, 115 F.3d 1192, 1194 (4th Cir. 1997); see also 28 U.S.C. § 2244(b). The issue of successiveness of a habeas petition may be raised by the court *sua sponte*. See Rodriguez v. Johnson, 104 F.3d 694, 697 n.1 (5th Cir. 1997); Davis v. McFadden, C/A No. 0:14-2662-RMG, 2014 WL 5305931, at *4 (D.S.C. Oct. 15, 2014) (adopting and incorporating Report and Recommendation). To be a successive petition, the first petition must be dismissed “on the merits.” Harvey v. Horan, 278 F.3d 370, 379 (4th Cir. 2002), abrogated on other grounds by Skinner v. Switzer, 562 U.S. 521 (2011) (citing Slack v. McDaniel, 529 U.S. 473, 485-89 (2000)). But, “[i]t is well settled that habeas corpus petitions submitted subsequent to a dismissal of a previous petition with prejudice for lack of prosecution will be considered successive.” Fishburne v. McCall, C/A No. 8:13-2453-TMC, 2013 WL 5797673, at *1 (D.S.C. Oct. 28, 2013) (collecting cases). Because Petitioner’s first habeas action was dismissed for failure to prosecute, that dismissal was “on the merits,” and his current Petition is successive.

Thus, Petitioner must obtain a Pre-Filing Authorization from the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit before this court may consider his successive § 2254 petition. See Gonzalez v. Crosby, 545 U.S. 524, 530 (2005) (“[B]efore the district court may accept a successive petition for filing, the court of appeals must determine that it presents a claim not previously raised that is sufficient to meet § 2244(b)(2)’s new-rule or actual-innocence provisions.”); see also In re Williams, 330 F.3d 277 (4th Cir. 2003). As Petitioner provides no indication that he received such permission from the Fourth Circuit prior to filing this Petition, it is subject to summary dismissal. Petitioner can obtain the forms necessary to seek authorization to file a second or successive habeas petition from the Clerk’s Office of the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals.

III. Conclusion

Accordingly, the court recommends that the Petition for a writ of habeas corpus be dismissed without prejudice and without requiring the respondent to file a return.



Paige J. Gossett

UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE

August 9, 2017
Columbia, South Carolina

*The parties are directed to note the important information in the attached
“Notice of Right to File Objections to Report and Recommendation.”*

Notice of Right to File Objections to Report and Recommendation

The parties are advised that they may file specific written objections to this Report and Recommendation with the District Judge. Objections must specifically identify the portions of the Report and Recommendation to which objections are made and the basis for such objections. “[I]n the absence of a timely filed objection, a district court need not conduct a de novo review, but instead must ‘only satisfy itself that there is no clear error on the face of the record in order to accept the recommendation.’ ” Diamond v. Colonial Life & Acc. Ins. Co., 416 F.3d 310 (4th Cir. 2005) (quoting Fed. R. Civ. P. 72 advisory committee’s note).

Specific written objections must be filed within fourteen (14) days of the date of service of this Report and Recommendation. 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1); Fed. R. Civ. P. 72(b); see Fed. R. Civ. P. 6(a), (d). Filing by mail pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 5 may be accomplished by mailing objections to:

Robin L. Blume, Clerk
United States District Court
901 Richland Street
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Failure to timely file specific written objections to this Report and Recommendation will result in waiver of the right to appeal from a judgment of the District Court based upon such Recommendation. 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1); Thomas v. Arn, 474 U.S. 140 (1985); Wright v. Collins, 766 F.2d 841 (4th Cir. 1985); United States v. Schronce, 727 F.2d 91 (4th Cir. 1984).